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ANTH 3750

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Food & Culture

Anthropology 3750, Section 1, Fall 2015

T, TH 9:30-10:45 AM, MH 264

Office Hours: T/Th 11am-12 and 1pm-2pm, W 10am-2pm,
or by appointment.

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When it comes to food, it sometimes seems like we live in a world of endless plenty. In North America and Europe, at least, the supermarkets are nearly always full, displaying thousands of items, from fruits and vegetables, to carefully packaged meats, breads, dairy and an endless variety of snacks, meals, and beverages. As a result of globalization and modern transportation, we are no longer bound by seasons, so we can eat whatever we desire, whenever we desire it. Yet in the middle of this cornucopia, we worry. Americans (and Europeans too) are increasingly obese, bringing on a series of health consequences previously uncommon in human history. We are unsure of the sustainability of our food system and wonder if we can continue to produce and distribute food with little or no regard for seasons or regions. We do not really know or understand where our food comes from—both in terms of place and in terms of the resources and labor that goes into it. We also know or suspect that much of the world does not share in our endless plenty. We worry about the consequences of sharp inequalities in food access within our own societies and between our societies and others.

This course will bring an anthropological perspective to the study of contemporary food systems. We will begin by explaining why people eat what they eat. Not everyone agrees on what food is, exactly, and our first task will be to try and understand how people figure that out. Although the answer may be related to the environment, it is also and profoundly determined by social structure and by culture. We will examine how the definition of food, along with the ways in which it is produced and distributed, shapes and is shaped by society and culture. We will analyze the central role food plays in the organization of kinship, relations between social classes, the practice of politics, and the shape of religious life. We will examine the relationship between changing systems of food production and distribution and the structure of societies. We will analyze food as it is shaped by culture, in the intimacy of kin relations and in our memories. We will discuss the ways our food system participates in globalization, from questions of inequality, to cultural homogenization, potential loss, and creativity. By the end of this class, you will be able to analyze global and local food systems, compare core cultural concepts about food and nutrition across cultures and societies, and critically examine the debates, policies, and social structures regarding food in contemporary society.

Warning: In this class you will be exposed to ideas and practices that may be radically different from those you find familiar and comfortable. You may read about or see images of people engaging in behavior you find shocking. This is of course standard for anthropology, but because this is a class about food, the possibility is perhaps higher than usual. If you are unable to tolerate being exposed to such difference, this class is not for you.

Course Requirements

The course is organized in a seminar format with weekly discussions based on the readings. Each reading assignment should be completed before the date it is to be discussed (see below).

You will be graded on:

- Class participation, worth 10% of your grade.
- 2 article briefings (submitted on Moodle), worth 20% of your grade (10% each).

- 4 short food observation notes (submitted on Moodle), worth 20% of your grade (5% each).
- 1 midterm examination, worth 20% of your grade.
- 1 final exam, worth 30% of your grade.

Attendance is required for success in this course. You may miss up to two class sessions without penalty. Each missed session beyond two will result in a 10% reduction in your final grade.

Grades

Standards for each assignment will be specified with those assignments. Generally, your participation grade will reflect both regular attendance (but see the policy above) and the extent to which you participate in class discussions. Briefings, observation notes, midterm, and final exam essays will be graded for the extent to which they respond to the specific assignment. Essays that reflect a basic understanding of materials will generally receive a C, while those that show a thorough understanding of the materials—readings, lectures and class discussions—will receive a B, and work that shows some critical insight into the material will receive an A. *The key thing to keep in mind is that your objective in most assignments is to demonstrate your engagement with the course material, including readings, lectures, and discussions.* Work that does not do that at all will receive a D (for work that somewhat attempts to respond to the assignment) or F (for work that fails completely to address the assignment).

Academic Integrity

Honesty and respect for your work and for the work of others are essential to your success in this course and in university life in general. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes cheating and plagiarism. Proper social science citation methods will be required on papers and exams. A detailed explanation of how to do this is available on the course Moodle site. Further details on the student code of conduct are available at www.studentaffairs.uno.edu.

Disabilities

I will do my best to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. Please feel free to contact me about your needs. If you have a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services to register and follow their procedures. They can be reached at 504-280-7284 or through their web site, <http://ods.uno.edu/>.

Required Texts

The following books are required and are available for purchase in the UNO bookstore as well as through on-line bookstores. All other listed readings will be available on the course Moodle site or through UNO's library databases. *(The ISBN listed here is for the paper format of each book. Electronic formats may have a different ISBN.)*

Crowther, Gillian. 2013. *Eating Culture: An Anthropological Guide to Food*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. ISBN 9781442604650

Erickson, Karla. 2009. *The Hungry Cowboy: Service and Community in a Neighborhood Restaurant*. University Press of Mississippi. ISBN 9781617030512

Errington, Frederick, Tatsuro Fujikura, and Deborah Gewertz. 2013. *The Noodle Narratives: The Global Rise of an Industrial Food into the Twenty-First Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN: 9780520276345.

Pollan, Michael. 2007. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin. ISBN 9780143038580

Sutton, David. 2014. *Secrets from the Greek Kitchen*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN 9780520280557

The Program

NOTE: Readings and topics are subject to amendment over the course of the semester! All readings are either in the required books or are available online, on the course Moodle site or the UNO library databases.

Food/Culture/Society: Raising Questions

8/20 Gopnik, Adam. 2005. Two Cooks: Taking Food to the Extremes. *The New Yorker*. September 5.

Trillin, Calvin. 2002. Missing Links; Boudin Anyone? In Praise of the Cajun Foodstuff that doesn't get around. *The New Yorker*. January 28.

Food Mystifications: America's Food Problems

8/25-8/27 Pollan, Introduction, chapters 1-10.

Bakker Le Billion, Karen. 2012. Prêt-à-Manger: Why the French Have Their Cake and Eat it Too. *Dissent*. 59(2):33-38.

Laudan, Rachel. 2001. A Plea for Culinary Modernism: Why We Should Love New, Fast, Processed Food. *Gastronomica*. 1(1):36-44.

9/1-9/3 Pollan, chapters 11-20.

Du Puis, E. Melanie. 2007. Angels and Vegetables: A Brief History of Food Advice In America. *Gastronomica*. 7(3):34-44.

Belasco, Warren. 2006. *Meals to Come: A History of the Future of Food*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapters 1-3. (Available as an ebook on the UNO library site.)

What is Food?

9/8-9/10 Crowther, Introduction, Chapter 1.

Douglas, Mary. "The Abominations of Leviticus"

Mintz, Sidney. "Time, Sugar, and Sweetness."

Beriss, David. 2011. How Americans Think: About Horsemeat, For Example. *FoodAnthropology*. <http://foodanthro.com/2011/12/06/how-americans-think-about-horsemeat-for-example/>.

Food observation 1 (food diary analysis), due 9/8.

Agriculture: From Peasants to Factory Farms...and back again?

9/15-9/17 Crowther, Chapters 2 and 3.

Manning, Richard. 2004. Against the Grain: A Portrait of Industrial Agriculture as a Malign Force. *American Scholar*. 73(1):13-35.

9/22-9/24 Rogers, Susan Carol. 2000. Farming Visions: Agriculture in French Culture. *French Politics, Culture & Society*. 18(1):50-70.

Trubek, Amy, Kolleen M. Guy and Sarah Bowen. 2010. Terroir: A French Conversation with a Transnational Future. *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*. 14(2):139-148.

Weiss, Brad. 2011. Making Pigs Local: Discerning the Sensory Character of Place. *Cultural Anthropology*. 26(3):438-461.

Paxson, Heather. 2008. Post-Pasteurian Cultures: The Microbiopolitics of Raw-Milk Cheese in the United States. *Cultural Anthropology*. 23(1):15-47.

Recommended: Heller, Chaia. 2007. Techne versus Technoscience: Divergent (and Ambiguous) Notions of Food "Quality" in the French Debate over GM Crops. *American Anthropologist*. 109(4):603-615.

Distribution: Farmer's Markets, Supermarkets, Global Markets

9/29-10/1 Errington, Fujikura and Gewertz, Introduction, chapters 1 & 2.

Freidberg, Susanne E. 2008. The Triumph of the Egg. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 50(2):400-423.

Meneley, Anne. 2007. Like an Extra Virgin. *American Anthropologist*. 109(4):678-687.

Food observation 2 (A food you associate with a place), due 9/39.

Mid Term Exam Available, 10/1.

10/6-10/8 Errington, Fujikura and Gewertz, chapters 3, 4, 5, & conclusion.

Leitch, Alison. 2003. Slow Food and the Politics of Pork Fat: Italian Food and European Identity. *Ethnos*. 68(4):437-462.

Bubinas, Kathleen. 2011. Farmers Markets in the Post-Industrial City. *City & Society*. 23(2):154-172.

Mid Term Exam, due 10/8.

Cooking, Family, Gender, Ethnicity...Authenticity?

10/13 Crowther, chapter 4.

Allison, Anne. 1991. Japanese Mothers and Obentos: The Lunch Box as Ideological State Apparatus. *Anthropological Quarterly*. 64(4):195-208.

Williams-Forson, Psyche. 2010. Other Women Cooked for My Husband: Negotiating Gender, Food, and Identities in an African American/Ghanaian Household. *Feminist Studies*. 36(2):435-461.

10/20-10/22 Crowther, chapter 5.

Shugart, Helene A. 2014. Food Fixations: Reconfiguring Class in Contemporary US Food Discourse. *Food, Culture & Society*. 17(1):261-281.

Roseberry, William. 1996. The Rise of Yuppie Coffees and the Reimagination of Class in the United States. *American Anthropologist*. 98(4):762-775.

10/27-10/29 Beriss, David. 2012. Red Beans and Rebuilding: An Iconic Dish, Memory, and Culture in New Orleans. Wilk, Richard and Livia Barbosa, eds. *Rice and Beans: A Unique Dish in a Hundred Places*. London: Berg. pp. 241-263.

Croegaert, Ana. 2011. Who Has Time for *Ćejf*? Postsocialist Migration and Slow Coffee in Neoliberal Chicago. *American Anthropologist*. 113(3):463-477.

Ray, Krishnendu. 2011. Dreams of Pakistani Grill and Vada Pao in Manhattan. *Food, Culture & Society*. 14(2):243-273.

Eating, Ritual, Community, Memory

11/3-11/5 Sutton, Introduction, chapters 1-3.

Crowther, chapter 6.

Anderson, Brett. 2001. Dinner with Moth. *The Times-Picayune*. September 25.

Renne, Elisha P. 2007. Mass Producing Food Traditions for West Africans Abroad. *American Anthropologist*. 109(4):616-625.

Food observation 3 (ritual food experience), due 11/5.

11/10-11/12 Sutton, chapters 4-6, conclusion, epilogue.

Ries, Nancy. 2009. Potato Ontology: Surviving Postsocialism in Russia. *Cultural Anthropology*. 24(2):181-212.

Eating in Public: Restaurant Worlds

11/17-11/19 Erickson, chapters 1-3.

Crowther, chapter 7.

Liechty, Mark. 2005. Carnal Economies: The Commodification of Food and Sex in Kathmandu. *Cultural Anthropology*. 20(1):1-38.

Sutton, David. 2007. Tipping: An Anthropological Meditation. Beriss, David and David Sutton, eds. *The Restaurants Book: Ethnographies of Where We Eat*. London: Berg. pp.191-204.

11/24 Erickson, chapters 4-conclusion.

Beriss, David. 2007. Authentic Creole: Tourism, Style and Calamity in New Orleans Restaurants. Beriss, David and David Sutton, eds. *The Restaurants Book: Ethnographies of Where We Eat*. London: Berg. pp. 151-166.

Food observation 4 (significant restaurant experience), due 11/24.

Cuisine, National and Global...Local

12/1-12/3 Crowther, chapters 8 and 9.

Caldwell, Melissa. 2004. Domesticating the French Fry: McDonald's and Consumerism in Moscow. *Journal of Consumer Culture*. 4(1):5-26.

Matejowsky, Ty. 2007. SPAM and Fast Food: "Glocalization" in the Philippines. *Food, Culture & Society*. 10(1):23-41.

Extra credit essays (see course Moodle site for instructions) due 12/1.

Final Exam available, 12/3.

Final Exam due, 12/10.